

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Council held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall, Marshall's Yard, Gainsborough, DN21 2NA on 4 March 2024 at 7.00 pm.

Present: Councillor Stephen Bunney (Chairman)
Councillor Matthew Boles (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Emma Bailey	Councillor John Barrett
Councillor Owen Bierley	Councillor Trevor Bridgwood
Councillor Mrs Jackie Brockway	Councillor Liz Clews
Councillor Frazer Brown	Councillor Karen Carless
Councillor Christopher Darcel	Councillor David Dobbie
Councillor Jacob Flear	Councillor Ian Fleetwood
Councillor Sabastian Hague	Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan
Councillor Paul Key	Councillor Mrs Angela Lawrence
Councillor Paul Lee	Councillor Peter Morris
Councillor Lynda Mullally	Councillor Maureen Palmer
Councillor Roger Patterson	Councillor Roger Pilgrim
Councillor Mrs Diana Rodgers	Councillor Mrs Lesley Rollings
Councillor Tom Smith	Councillor Jim Snee
Councillor Mrs Mandy Snee	Councillor Paul Swift
Councillor Baptiste Velan	Councillor Moira Westley
Councillor Trevor Young	

In Attendance:

Ian Knowles	Chief Executive
Emma Foy	Director of Corporate Services and Section 151 Officer
Lisa Langdon	Assistant Director for People and Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer
Katie Storr	Democratic Services & Elections Team Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer

Also Present: 4 members of the public

Apologies Councillor Eve Bennett
Councillor Adam Duguid
Councillor Jeanette McGhee

64 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Having been proposed and seconded, it was: -

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of Full Council held on 22 January 2024 be confirmed, approved and signed as a correct record.

65 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made at this point in the meeting. The Chairman reminded Members that they could make a declaration at any point in the meeting should they feel it necessary to do so.

66 MATTERS ARISING

The Chairman introduced the report advising Members that it would be taken "as read" unless Members had any questions that they wished to raise.

With no comments or questions, and with no requirement to vote, the matters arising were **DULY NOTED.**

67 ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairman

The Chairman addressed the Council, referencing briefly some of the events which he had been involved in and attended since Council last met, noting there had only been a five week period between each meeting.

Starting with the sad occasion of attending at the funeral of the wife of the former Chairman of Council, held at the Lea Fields Crematorium. It had been a very moving ceremony, with several Council representatives there to support the former Chairman. It was anticipated a celebration of life would be held in coming months.

The Chairman had attended a number of business visits, focusing on those local businesses within the Visitor Economy sector and one in particular with environmental and climate credentials to be applauded. The first trip was to Wold Pines in Market Rasen, a high ropes experience which had been much fun and provided for a memorable video opportunity of the Chairman "having a go". He fully recommended the independent outdoor experience to be had at Wold Pines, especially for those with adventurous youngsters.

Secondly the Chairman had visited Uncle Henry's, receiving a tour of their tourist options and a fascinating talk on the company's sustainability approach and their complete circular economy. The Chairman indicated he would like all Members to have the opportunity, via way of Member presentation, to hear about the company's approach which he considered typified the District's aspirations in respect of managing the climate situation. Again, he considered it a fascinating operation and well worth a visit.

The final visit had been to Wright's ice-cream parlour, a recipient of funding from one of the District Council's Community Grants Scheme, which had provided for a play facility on site, not only for visitors to the Parlour, but which was also accessible to the local community free of charge.

Finally, the Chairman referred to his attendance at the two-day APSE Climate Summit, highlighting a significant change in the expression been used when talking about such matters. There had been less talk of dealing with climate change, but rather of climate adaptation and preventative work. It had been a fascinating event, with a lot to take away and consider. This area of work continued to be a focus for the Council and would continue long into the future.

Leader

The Leader made the following address to Council: -

“Chairman, Members, welcome to tonight's meeting, I have three items to report to the Full Council and I will try and keep my announcements brief. So firstly, Lincoln University - myself and the Deputy Leader were delighted to attend an event held by Lincoln University. Whilst we already have a good working relationship with the University, we are keen to build on this joint working, exploring opportunities to work with them on projects such as the step fusion project, with a long term aspiration to bring a University presence to the heart of West Lindsey.

Savoy Cinema - we attended the Ground-breaking event. Despite significant increases in the construction costs, we are delighted to continue the support for the cinema project, in Gainsborough, these increases have impacted on the amount of Government funding, awarded as part of the Levelling-Up Programme, but despite these challenges, we are pleased that the Scheme has now begun. I, along with other Members of the Council, attended the Ground-breaking event held last Friday and were delighted that the contract to build the Cinema was awarded to a local contractor and construction company, which will create and support employment opportunities for local people. The cinema is expected to be completed by Spring 2025.

Finally, the weekly antique market - Following six months of planning and working with MH Antiques, we will be launching a weekly antiques market in Gainsborough from 30 March 2024. Delivering a vibrant town centre is a key priority for this Administration and this planned weekly event has already attracted some regional and national attention. We have approximately 50 traders booked in on 30 March and we welcome any Members who would like to volunteer on that day and encourage as many Members as possible to support the event.”

Chief Executive

The Chief Executive addressed Council and advised of his invitation to speak at a launch event for Technology One, the Council's Finance system supplier, the previous Wednesday, where the future of technology in Local Government had been discussed. The event was to launch a study Technology One had undertaken with FT Longitude looking at the New Digital Reality for Local Government.

Like the Leader, the Chief Executive had been really pleased to be part of the Ground-

breaking ceremony for the Savoy Cinema on Friday of the previous week. He too welcomed the contract having been awarded to a local firm the Gelder Group. He placed on records his extensive thanks to Sally Grindrod-Smith and her team for getting the Project to this stage and he looked forward to seeing the cinema emerge from the ground over the next 65 weeks.

It was with delight, that the Chief Executive announced that the Local Land Charges Team have been shortlisted for three awards in the 2024 Land Data Awards for Excellence. The Team had been nominated for Best Migrated Local Authority, Customer Satisfaction Award and Local Authority Searches Team of the Year.

Thanks were expressed to Deborah Chapman and her Team for their hard work over the last two years, which had now been recognised nationally.

Finally, the Chief Executive took the opportunity to remind Members of the fifth Illuminate event being held on Saturday 9 March. Previous events had been attended by over two thousand people and the Chief Executive was of the belief this year would be no exception and hoped to see as many Members there as possible.

This brought announcements to a conclusion.

68 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Chairman advised the meeting that no public questions had been received.

69 QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 9

The Chairman advised the meeting that no questions had been submitted by Members under Council Procedure Rule No.9.

70 MOTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 10

The Chairman advised the meeting that one Motion had been submitted pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No. 10 and this was set out in the agenda.

Councillor Brown was invited to put his Motion to the meeting as follows:-

“The street cleansing team at West Lindsey have always done a fantastic job of keeping our streets clean and safe, however due to the increasing number of storms and occurrences of high winds, there is now far more debris in the roadside gutters than we used to get in the past.

In Nettleham, and other rural areas outside of Gainsborough, many roadside gutters are thick with mud, twigs, leaves, and other debris. After moderate rainfall this ends up in the drains and ultimately, they end up blocked. After storms or heavy rainfall, this exacerbates flooding issues and has created flooding in areas where we wouldn't normally expect it.

West Lindsey currently has one HGV road sweeper operating on a 16-20 week schedule to cover all of the towns and villages in the district. An additional HGV road sweeper is hired in November and December to deal with Autumn leaf fall, but footways are not touched.

Ad-hoc sweeping requests can be made to the street cleansing team, but the request-list extends the normal schedule, and where issues are caused by adverse weather events, the probability is that some wards could have to wait up to 5 months for road sweeping.

If the kerbside debris is not removed quickly then many drains could become blocked.

Given that we're told to expect a higher frequency of adverse weather events over the coming years, and flooding effects so many of our wards, I feel that it's important we do everything we can, within our remit, to try keep the drains clear.

I therefore call upon this Council to support me in requesting that the Prosperous Communities Committee explore options to increase our road sweeping capability, including the feasibility and financial implications.

I so move
Councillor Frazer Brown"

The Chairman thanked Councillor Brown and the motion was duly seconded.

Members attention was drawn to Council Procedure Rule 10.4 " *if the subject of a motion comes within the remit of any committee(s), it shall, upon being moved and seconded, stand referred without discussion to such committee(s) for consideration and determination.*

The Chairman indicated, whilst he had some discretion, he would on this occasion be applying Rule 10.4 to which the meeting signified their contentment.

As such the Chairman advised, the matter would stand referred for determination, the motion submitter would be invited to Prosperous Communities Committee, when the motion was considered and determined, and Council would be advised at their next meeting when this was anticipated to be.

71 EXECUTIVE BUSINESS PLAN 2024/25 - 2026/27, MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2024/25 - 2028/29, COUNCIL TAX AND REVENUE BUDGET 2024/25 AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2024/25 - 2028/29

Members gave consideration to a report which presented the Executive Business Plan and the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2024/25 onwards.

The Leader made the following budget speech to Council in presenting the report: -

“As Leader of the Council, I am pleased to present the Budget for 2024/25.

I present this along with our Executive Business Plan and Medium Term Financial Plan, all of which contribute to achieving our vision of making West Lindsey a great place to live, where people, businesses and communities can thrive and reach their potential.

Our communities have told us that certain things are important to them and we have endeavoured to address these issues when setting our priorities. As a new Administration we have been able to include priority areas we feel will meet our vision for the District.

We have approved the strategy to take legal action against the Home Office to protect investment, Economic Growth and Regeneration at RAF Scampton which will deliver £300m of investment and prosperity to the District. We believe this project has the potential to transform our district, creating opportunities for employment in some of the most exciting 21st century industries. We believe this project is worth fighting for.

We aim to ensure that the investment brought in from the UK shared prosperity fund is maximised, with all its projects due to be completed on time. We have been committed to ensuring that the cinema project is supported and we are delighted that this project is now underway and look forward to it being completed early next year.

Markets are a key priority for our towns. When they flourish, we believe they add vibrancy to public spaces, provide opportunities for social interaction and support the retail sector in our town centres. In Gainsborough we are keen that our market place with its market, is developed to become the centre of a thriving Independent quarter of the town.

We aim to continue to grow our monthly farmers market and we are excited to announce that we will be starting a new weekly antiques market on the 30 March. This will run through to October. Our commitment to culture and heritage will continue. Enabling these priorities to flourish whilst our improvements to the market place are underway, will be a priority. Going forward we will strive to develop successful partnerships around heritage, culture and the Arts and use these partnerships to increase opportunities for our communities and help revive our town centres.

Increasing opportunities for participating in sport, leisure and cultural activities is a priority. Over recent years we have seen a decline in opportunities available for residents of West Lindsey and we are keen to reverse this trend. We have included additional resources for sports and cultural development in this budget, with two new development officers to be recruited. We are working closely with our Leisure providers developing our programmes in Market Rasen and Gainsborough and we are beginning to explore options for our Leisure centre in Gainsborough, considering ways that we may be able to

expand and improve this facility going forward.

Ensuring the Council is meeting its new duties and obligations under the 2021 Environment Act is a key priority. The Council is preparing to deliver food waste collections across the District and has included funding for this within the capital programme. We have focused on enforcement and anti-social behaviour, increasing fines for fly tipping and we have increased the budget in this area to allow for two additional enforcement officers.

We have expanded our award-winning waste collection service to offer households the opportunity to hire an extra-large, commercial sized bin for times when more capacity is needed creating an alternative to skip hire. We will be consulting with our residents on the green waste collection service to ensure this service best meets the needs of our communities.

We are Investing in green technologies and have recently received over £400,000 to make our leisure centre in Gainsborough more energy efficient by investing in solar panels.

Our services need to be as high performing as possible, and we are ensuring there is continuous learning and improvement throughout the organisation. This includes investing in a new customer contact system in 2024-25. We are investing in staff by training employees in the 'West Lindsey Way' and to ensuring staff are enabled and supported to be the best they can be.

As part of the Community Grant Scheme delivered from funding from the UK government, alongside our own matched funding, we are awarding grants for projects across the district to improve our community spaces, places and the activities available to residents based on community demand. These include a play area refurbishment in Keelby, a new multi-use games area at the Benjamin Adlard School, Gainsborough which offers physical activities for the wider community. We are funding a refit of the toilets in Reepham and Cherry Willingham Village Hall to increase accessibility. We are also enabling solar panel projects in Nettleham and Toft Newton to improve the sustainability of community organisations and contribute to a net zero carbon West Lindsey.

Funding is being provided for a new heritage project in Ingham and a project to provide a community space in the church in the village of Grayingham. In addition, we are supporting projects that are tackling issues that are affecting our residents such as a befriending service by Age UK.

Members of the public will be very conscious that a large number of local authorities are struggling financially with the particular challenges and high costs that the energy crisis have thrown up and with the country slipping into recession, these challenges do not appear to be going away anytime soon.

In the longer-term, Government funding may reduce but we are in a good place to meet any challenges from a sound financial position.

We have been mindful that our residents expect us to be sensible with public

money and at every turn we are fortunate to have the support of the very high level of financial expertise present in our senior officers and their teams and we thank them for this.

The 2024/25 budget has been set to ensure we continue to provide award-winning services, whilst investing for the future through the delivery of the capital programme.

The 2024/25 Budget supports delivery of our Corporate Plan objectives, protects our award-winning services, improves our customers' experience, delivers efficiencies and will continue to deliver value for money for the residents of West Lindsey.

All of this is being delivered to the residents of West Lindsey for an average of £4.65 per week.

I therefore commend these measures to Council and am delighted to propose the recommendations”

The Leader of the Opposition, in responding, indicated their Groups shared common ground. On the whole the Opposition were supportive of the matters raised in the Leader's budget speech and welcomed that projects created under the former Administration were being continued. News of the cinema completion, and local investment in local businesses were welcomed. Regards Scampton and the approved stance, again these measures were fully supported. The Leader of the Opposition offered similar praise to the Officers, for their expertise and efforts in creating a balanced budget in these difficult times. However, he sought to propose an amendment to the budget in respect of the proposed increased investment into sport and cultural officers. Providing context for this amendment, he spoke of delivering West Lindsey's core business functions, referencing the motion earlier in the meeting, relating to a desire to increase capacity in street cleansing, kerb cleaning and footway cleaning. The Opposition were of the belief that a good percentage of the growth fund could be allocated into street cleansing to afford all residents of West Lindsey, a cleaner environment, to work in and to live in.

It was suggested that focusing on sport and culture, would not provide District wide benefits to all residents, whereas if additional funding was added to street cleansing, all residents would benefit. The reserve earmarked for sports and culture he believed to be circa £100k. The Leader of the Opposition did take the opportunity to commend all Officers of the Council and acknowledged the award winning service offered by operational services, and as such was of the view that further investment into that service would enable the Council and its officers to continue to deliver high quality core service functions.

With clarity having been sought by the Section 151 Officer, for the avoidance of doubt, the Opposition Group Leader confirmed his amendment related to the £112,000 set aside in Member-led growth for two officers and the desire that this be re-allocated to street cleansing budget, to reflect the increase demand on the service brought about by increased flooding events in the District and heavier than normal rainfall.

As such the Opposition Leader proposed the following amendment: -

“that £112,000 allocated in Member-led growth for two officers be moved to the street cleansing budget”

The amendment was duly seconded and debate of the amendment ensued.

The Deputy Leader of the Administration expressed her disappointment in the amendment. Services and opportunities in sports, arts, culture and leisure had reduced in recent years and under the former Administration, the new administration wished to reverse this trend. Arts Sports Culture and Leisure were an important factor in making a place. The wider benefits to mental health and wellbeing of a good offer in such facilities was also well documented and proven. These proposed Officers would assist the Council in being able to attract funding once again, make best use of the numerous village hall facilities that existed across the District, help communities grow their current activities and attract those national bodies in Sports Development.

It was agreed the Council's street cleansing and refuse service was amongst the most valued by residents and performed excellent. It was suggested this should not be viewed as an either or proposal. The motion around increasing resources in the street cleansing would progress and if financially feasible would be considered for implementation, it was also suggested that other responsible agencies should fulfil their duties and current issues were due to a lack of investment by other bodies for numerous years. She urged the Chamber that improving and increasing the wider sports culture leisure offer should not be rejected in favour of an increased street cleansing budget.

Opposition Members believed the amendment ensured District Wide benefits, which would not be achieved by funding such Officers. Suggesting the benefits would only be to those living in Gainsborough and the surrounding area. It was further suggested that cleaner streets and preventing homes from flooding would be a greater priority to residents.

There was political exchange regarding the reason for drains and sewerage systems failing and whose responsibility that was, as well as political exchange regarding the recent history of sports development in the District and what had led to its reduction.

Reference was made to the Cultural Strategy work ongoing , the opportunities it would afford and how these Officers would enable that work to be delivered. It was suggested the amendment would undermine the aspirations and desires of that emerging Strategy which had been awaited. Administration Members spoke of their desire to re-invigorate previous events in the District and spoke of how other authorities had managed to maintain their arts sports, culture and leisure offer.

Differing views were expressed about the real impact such Officers would have, while counter arguments were made regarding the impact £100k street cleansing would have on flooding.

With further political exchanges, and counter challenges over statements previously made during the debate, in the absence of new points, the amendment was put to the vote. This being a recorded vote in line with legislative requirements, votes were cast as set out below :-

For: - Councillors Barrett, Bierley, Bridgwood, Brockway, Brown, Fleetwood, Lawrence, Lee,

Morris, Palmer, Patterson, Pilgrim, Rodgers, and Smith (14)

Against: - Councillors Bailey, Boles, Bunney, Carless, Clews, Darcel, Dobbie, Flear, Hague, Howitt-Cowan, Key, Mullally, Rollings, J Snee, M Snee, Swift, Velan, Westley and Young (19)

Abstain: - No Votes (0)

With a total of 14 votes for and 19 against the amendment was declared **LOST**.

Further debate ensued in which Members from across all sides of the Chamber reflected on the significant financial challenges Local Government as a sector faced and were proud to be able to have a balanced budget whilst still seeking to improve and extend services. It was suggested by the Opposition their commercial investment strategy had been significant in generating income and reducing reliance on reducing government grant.

Officers were applauded for their assistance, advice and expertise. Arising from two questions it was confirmed projected income from all sources for 2024/2025 was circa £43million. Officers undertook to provide the total income for the current year outside of the meeting, given it was not to hand. Officers also explained financial regulations, noting that revenue money could be spent to fund either revenue or capital items. Capital monies – for example monies generated through sales of assets could not be used to fund revenue services (day to day costs).

Bringing the debate and comments to a close and having had the recommendations, as set out in the report, moved and seconded, they were put to the vote. In accordance with required legislation for voting on the Council's budget, a recorded vote was taken.

Votes were cast as set out below:

For: - Councillors Bailey, Barrett, Bierley, Boles, Bridgwood, Brockway, Brown, Bunney, Carless, Clews, Darcel, Dobbie, Flear, Fleetwood, Hague, Howitt-Cowan, Key, Lawrence, Lee, Morris, Mullally, Palmer, Patterson, Pilgrim, Rodgers, Rollings, Smith, J Snee, M Snee, Swift, Velan, Westley and Young (33)

Against: - No Votes (0)

Abstain: - No Votes (0)

With no Councillors voting against the proposals, the recommendations were declared **CARRIED** unanimously and on that basis it was:-

RESOLVED that: -

- (a) Members recognise the external environment and the financial challenges which the Council could face in the medium to longer term depending on future government policy;
- (b) the Statement of the Director of Corporate Services (Section 151 officer) on the Robustness of Estimates and Adequacy of Reserves at paragraph

- 1.10 be accepted;
- (c) the Medium Term Financial Plan 2024/25 to 2028/29 be approved with an awareness of the risks associated with it, as detailed at Appendix 2;
 - (d) the formal Council tax resolution as detailed in Appendix 8, be approved, this being a band D equivalent amount of £241.55;
 - (e) the Revenue budget 2024/25 detailed at paragraph 1.4 be approved;
 - (f) the movement in earmarked reserves detailed at paragraph 1.6 be approved;
 - (g) the level of fees and charges for 2024/25 as detailed at Appendix 3 be approved;
 - (h) the Capital Investment Strategy at Appendix 4 be approved;
 - (i) the Capital Programme 2024/25 – 2028/29 and financing detailed at Appendices 5 and 6 be approved
 - (j) the Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25 be approved and the Treasury Investment Strategy, the Borrowing Strategy and the Treasury and Borrowing Prudential Indicators detailed at Appendix 7 be adopted;
 - (k) the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy as contained in the Treasury Management Strategy at Appendix 7 be approved; .
 - (l) the 2024/25 Pay Policy Statement and Human Resources statement at Appendices 13 and 14 be approved;
 - (m) the introduction of a new Markets fee and charge for operators who deliver between eight and twenty five stalls on a specialist market be approved at a charge of £10 per stall and the age range for Young Traders be changed to 16 – 30, to align with National Market Trader Federation guidelines; and
 - (n) Corporate Policy and Resources committee be delegated to approve any changes to existing Fees and Charge required during the year, after the budget has been set.

The meeting concluded at 8.16 pm.

Chairman

